

Centre for Academic Innovation

Annual report 2020/21

The background of the entire slide is a dense, out-of-focus array of small, glowing lights in blue, red, and yellow, creating a bokeh effect against a dark background. The lights are arranged in a way that suggests they are strung together, possibly as part of a decorative display.

Mission statement

CAI aims to become a world-leading centre of pedagogic and academic innovation and excellence, with a focus on enhancing and disrupting the learning and teaching experience.

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Introduction

The Centre for Academic Innovation (CAI) is De Montfort University's (DMU) hub for developments in pedagogic praxis and associated practical research.

CAI supports and disseminates teaching and learning good practice across the university and beyond, and our aim is to become a world-leading centre of pedagogic and academic innovation and excellence, with a focus on enhancing and disrupting the learning and teaching experience.

At DMU, CAI explores, supports and facilitates best practice in the transformation of assessment, learning and curriculum development. We encourage and facilitate enhancement, engagement, and transformational thinking and activities within the teaching and learning experience, supporting pedagogic innovation and providing leadership.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the ways in which CAI has delivered the above can be categorised into four main areas: student voice, pedagogic encounters, educational leadership, and resources; this annual report will thus be structured.

A note from the CAI Director

CAI's work can be distilled into four clear, yet intersecting categories (Student Voice; Pedagogic Encounters; Educational Leadership; and Resources) over the last year. As an outfit working across DMU that was launched in November 2019, we spent our first year crafting a clear operational and strategic direction, creating a distinct and disruptive brand, and negotiating an offer with relevant stakeholders throughout the university (through a range of consultative approaches) to promote academic innovation, pedagogic disruption, and provide a space for inspiring and showcasing best practice.

This report focuses on the period after the first year, from September 2020 to September 2021, which we at CAI consider as an epoch of consolidation. In a time of great upheaval to the higher education sector, especially linked to the ramifications of the Covid-19-generated collateral, the activities of CAI have focused, in this period under discussion, on enhancing the student voice through our work with the Student Learning and Teaching Consultants, and the Student Action Committee as dialogical conduits for the process of positioning students as central to the co-production process. We have also continued to engender pedagogic encounters through the annual Learning and Teaching Conference, co-organised with People and Organisational Development (POD), the Festival of Teaching, and a whole range of staff engagement activities including disruptive labs, coffee mornings, seminars, and masterclass series. Our work on Educational Leadership is illustrated in the appointment of Pedagogic Champions across key components of DMU, the operationalisation of the CAI Sabbatical Fellowships, engagement with the National Teaching Fellow, DMU Teacher Fellow and CATE community, as well as starting work on the \$1.5 million World Bank-funded support for the establishment of a new University of Science, Engineering, and Technology in The Gambia. We are also really excited by the progress we have made in generating pedagogic resources, especially in the areas of relaunching the two pedagogic journals (Gateway Papers and Journal of Critical Southern Studies). CAI as the repository of the remote teaching website, primarily housing the online teaching resources, had over 10,125 unique

page views from staff since last June; and our online resource kit for staff had over 2315 visits up to June 2021.

The last year saw the departure of Professor Jackie Labbe who played an instrumental role in setting up CAI; we salute her for this initiative. We will also seize this opportunity, albeit lately, to welcome our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Katie Normington. The last year has been very challenging, yet very fruitful. We encourage you to share our journey through the following pages.

Professor Momodou Sallah

Director, Centre for Academic Innovation

Student voice

DMU regards its students as co-creators in learning and teaching, where we respond to students' needs through conversation and consultation. CAI engages with students, staff and the Student Union to create opportunities for students to offer feedback and recommendations on their learning experience, and build a legacy that will provide benefits for their successors. The two schemes we operationalise this imperative through are the Student Action Committee, and Student Learning and Teaching Consultants, detailed below.

Student Action Committee & Student Learning and Teaching Consultants

Student Action Committee

Last year, CAI established the Student Action Committee (SAC) to review academic teaching, learning and assessment at De Montfort University based on their experience. This year, 50 students applied to join the committee and work with CAI and Joanna Dine-Hart, Student Union Development Executive, to support the implementation of creative solutions for improvement. The CAI Director, CAI Coordinator and the previous Student Union Academic Executive, Laura Flowers, reviewed the applications and invited 15 students to form the 2020-2021 committee, based on their passion and desire to positively influence DMU's learning experience.

The committee voted in a Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary and Social Media Manager and decided to split into three workstreams:

- Remote teaching and learning experiences
- Programme structures (semesterisation)
- Peer learning

They surveyed students to gather their views on these topics and considered external practice. Members of SAC also sought the reflections and opinions from DMU staff during a CAI Coffee Morning and a CAI Disruptive Lab, after first sharing their student findings.

The workstreams produced reports and infographics to demonstrate their findings:

- Read SAC's report on the benefits and hinderances of semesterisation at DMU
- Take a look at infographic one and infographic two to see their findings on learning during the pandemic
- The peer learning group shared their raw survey results with the central DMU mentoring team, so this could be fed into their work

At the end of their projects, we asked all members to complete an evaluation survey on their time as part of SAC. Between the seven people who responded, students reported that their experience as part of the committee helped them to develop skills such as team working, time management, presentation skills, reporting skills, organisational skills, leadership skills, the ability to work alongside staff, committee experience, digital skills/experience, and it provided them with a social opportunity.

They also valued our approach in empowering students to enhance their learning experience: *"I like that the meetings were student-led and very much focused on students' ideas, but there was support available if required to make suggestions or give a push when a meeting was stalling."*

One student commented: *"Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and working with new students/staff. It gave me something to focus on, away from my own course that I know will have a positive impact."*

Having reported on the Student Action Committee, we will now move to the other strand of this imperative, the Student Learning and Teaching Consultants.

Student Learning and Teaching Consultants

This year, CAI took responsibility of the Student and Learning Teaching Consultants (SLTC). SLTCs are expected:

1. To undertake research with students and staff into the academic experience at DMU
2. To support the enhancement of the student experience and the implementation of the co-creation strand of the University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (ULTAS) 2018-2023
3. To work collaboratively with key stakeholders, including academic staff in the relevant School/Department/Directorate, the Associate Professor for Student Experience, staff in the Centre for Academic Innovation (CAI), and staff in the office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic
4. To draft briefing papers and present ideas on agreed areas of investigation
5. To undertake relevant training in accordance with the requirements of the role

6. To provide a summary of the outcomes, actions and any impact made as a result of their research and co-creation activities

Building on last year's success, 19 SLTCs were recruited through Unitemps after an initial shortlist of 25 applicants, across all faculties. Working with the CAI Director, the Associate Professors (Student Experience) (ASPE) supported the recruitment of SLTCs and the identification of the theme of: 'Covid-19 lockdown and learning and teaching assessment'. SLTCs were divided into four groups, mainly based on faculty, led by an APSE, to research this topic area over a period of six months. With regular input from CAI, the groups were able to interpret this theme as they wished, thus enabling them to become co-producers of knowledge.

Presentation event

The Student Action Committee and the Student Learning and Teaching Consultants showcased their work at a virtual event open to all DMU staff and students. Each group took their turn to share their findings and recommendations. Professor Andy Collop, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, remarked: *"There's some really good work going on here and I'm really keen that it feeds into the work we're doing at a university level. Thank you all very much for participating in this."*

Feedback from staff attending the session was extremely positive, with comments on both the insights the students provided and the quality of their presentations:

"The presentations have been fantastic. Very well presented and so important to us all so thank you."

"These presentations are invaluable and extremely professional. Huge thanks!"

"The students' presentation materials - wow. I could learn a lot!"

"To all the students, you should be really proud of yourselves. You are creating and helping to influence positive change."

The students' work has already been used to support conversations apart of the Education 2030 initiative. You can find the reports from the Student Learning and Teaching Consultants online: [SLTC ADH](#), [SLTC CEM](#), and [SLTC HLS](#).

Pedagogic Encounters

One of the main ways in which CAI supports and disseminates teaching and learning good practice across the university is through a variety of events where pedagogic ideas are exchanged, disrupted or incubated; we term these as pedagogic encounters. We hold larger events such as conferences and festivals, and smaller sessions, all of which focus on enhancing DMU's pedagogic practice.

Masterclass and seminar series

CAI had previously created a masterclass and seminar series, holding events on a termly basis. The seminar series focuses on providing a space for academics, students and practitioners to engage in transformative conversations about a particular topic in deep and critical ways. The masterclasses are spaces for experts to showcase examples of great practice and transfer skills, knowledge and

values to other lecturers. Both focus on pedagogic innovation and disruption with invited speakers leading the sessions. CAI continued this series virtually throughout 2020-2021, focusing on extremely important and relevant topics.

Anti-racism and decolonisation in teaching and learning

On 18 November 2020, CAI held a virtual seminar titled 'Anti-racism and decolonisation in teaching and learning' with speakers:

- Kennetta Hammond Perry, Director, Stephen Lawrence Research Centre
- Chris Hall, Head of Equality and Diversity
- Richard Kennedy, Senior Lecturer in Education Studies
- Diya Rattanpal, Student Union, Equality and Diversity Executive

Within the framework of DMU's equality and diversity policies, decolonisation agenda, and Black Lives Matter response, the seminar focused on a critical examination of decolonisation and anti-racism in relation to teaching and learning at DMU, and explored how we can find solutions to current issues and develop best practice in our pedagogy. We had 19 participants and feedback included these comments:

"Thanks all, so important to have these conversations"

"Inspiring."

"Great presentation - thank you"

"That was fantastic, Richard - thank you!"

Decolonisation and anti-racism in the classroom workshop

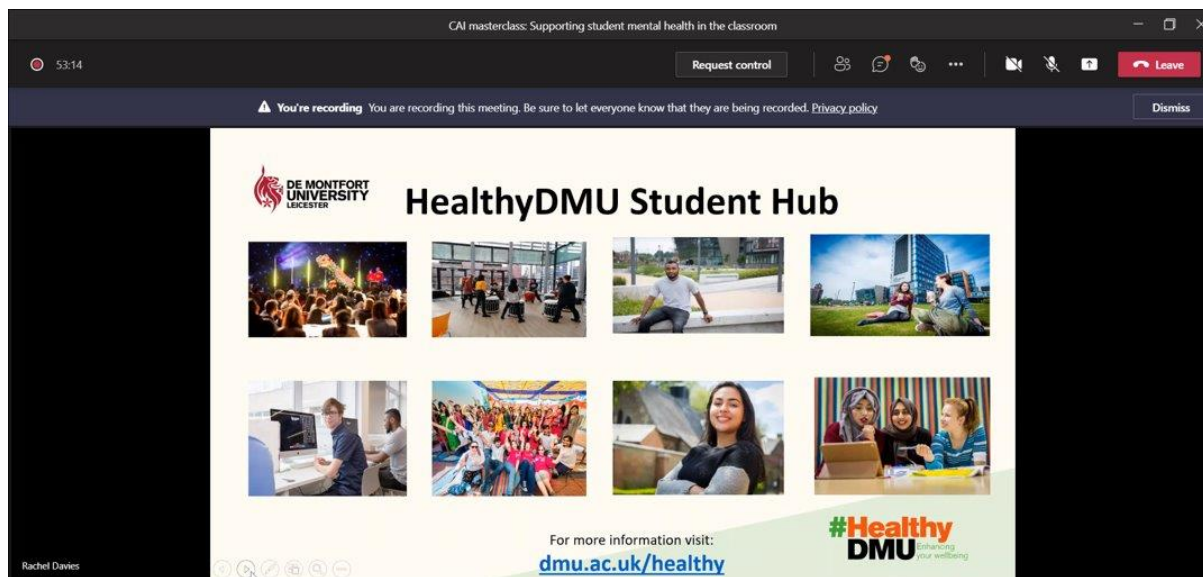
On 10 December 2020, CAI held a virtual seminar-workshop titled 'Decolonisation and anti-racism in the classroom workshop' facilitated by Kaushika Patel, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor/Dean; Hardeep Basra, Academic Development Consultant; and Derrick Mensah, Special Projects Officer (Student Engagement). This critical interactive workshop was designed to focus on how we can create and build an anti-racist environment in the classroom to ensure all students feel a sense of belonging, looking at feedback from students about their experiences, curriculum design and the co-creation handbook. The event was recorded.

We had 19 participants and feedback included the following comments:

"This work is fantastic, thank you so much. Sharing practice is really helpful to build confidence across programme teams to embrace this work - more opportunities please to talk about this, 'discomfort' is necessary."

"This has been very insightful."

"Thank you - this has been really valuable."



Supporting student mental health in the classroom

CAI asked the Student Welfare Team to lead a masterclass on 14 April 2021 on how staff can support student mental health in the classroom.

The masterclass considered practical tools and approaches that teaching staff can use. Delivered by Phil Scarffe, Head of Student Welfare, with contributions from academic staff and the Student Welfare team, the presenters discussed the opportunities for professional development, the embedded delivery of student wellbeing support, and key DMU resources for staff and students.

Phil discussed our approach to this topic at DMU and the wider landscape in the sector, as well as the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic, and our return to campus, posed for student mental health. The event was recorded.

21 members of staff attended the session. Feedback included the following comments:

"Thank you for the session today. Really informative and great to see plenty of resources available to students."

"I've found this hugely useful as a lecturer and a Programme Leader. Huge thanks."

"Useful insight into the range and access to a whole host of support for students."



**Let's tune up our remote learning:
five transformational ideas from the Sherwood-Suzuki approach**



Libby Sherwood and Jo Rushworth

Learning, Teaching and Personal Tutoring Mini Conference (2020)

The annual Learning and Teaching conference was pushed back to February 2021 due to the Covid-19 outbreak and in its place, CAI held an interim conference focusing on the transition to remote teaching in September 2020.

The aim of the mini-conference was to better equip DMU staff to respond to the new demands of higher education during and post Covid-19 by increasing digital capabilities and delivery of virtual pedagogy. The objectives of the conference were:

- To provide a 'live' forum for the sharing of virtual pedagogy, assessment and feedback, and personal tutoring practice
- To provide examples of new and different ways of supporting students to engage with teaching, learning, assessment and personal tutoring in preparation for the new academic year 2020-21

The virtual mini-conference was an opportunity for DMU staff to consider how to meet the challenges of teaching in an online environment in the pandemic.

Organisations and staff across the sector had to rapidly change their approach to educating students to ensure that they were able to complete their modules and qualifications within expected timeframes and without detriment.

In addition, personal tutoring at DMU is underpinned by key principles which assume that the student-personal tutor relationship is built and developed on campus with opportunities for group and individual face-to-face interactions. The university had to adapt its approach to accommodate the new situation.

With the support of DMU staff, we facilitated 20 presentations throughout the day, in addition to a keynote address from Professor Jackie Labbe, previous PVC (Academic) and a panel discussion. A total of 213 people, including DMU staff and a few selected partners, attended.

In the conference evaluation, 92% of participants rated the event as 'very good' or 'good' and 87% felt the conference themes were 'very relevant'. General comments included the following:

"Thanks so much for arranging the conference at such a relevant time. I was reassured by the presenters and participants that we are all pretty much in the same boat and we need to treat the situation as an opportunity to expand our knowledge and skill base."

"Just a really supportive and well considered conference that really tapped into some of the concerns and worries we're all facing. Thank you to all the CAI team for your exceptional hard work."

"Well done to everyone involved - It does help to have these sessions and feel as lecturers part of a learning community - often missed when working at home!"

"I am entirely impressed that I have attended a whole day of virtual conference - all sessions ran from start to finish - the tech delivered - and it has made me feel excited and optimistic overall about the possibilities for delivery, as well as feeling less alone in my worry and confusion. Thank you so much to the organisers for putting this together - it was so, so needed and hats off to all the speakers for delivering the sessions online."

CAI enabled the presentations to be recorded so staff could use them, along with the presentation slides, as a resource and engage with sessions they may have missed on the day, as they continued to transition to remote teaching. You can find this content on the [DMU website](#).

Learning and Teaching Conference (2021)

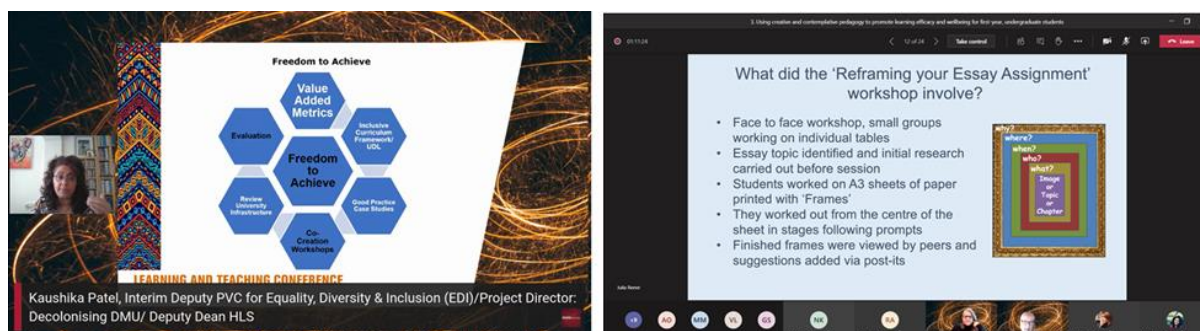


CAI worked with DMU's People and Organisational Development team and with representatives across the university to organise the annual Learning and Teaching conference virtually for the first time.

The conference brought together our educators, researchers and practitioners, to exchange and share practices on all issues concerning teaching, learning, assessment, and feedback. Given the disruption to teaching and learning generated by Covid-19, this year's theme focused on the reimagination of the 'university of tomorrow', with three strands:

- Disruptive pedagogy
- Decolonising DMU
- Learning for good: student experience and social impact

It provided a platform to present and discuss the sector's most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions we can adopt to meet future expectations.



DMU's new Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Katie Normington led the introduction; this being her first opportunity to address to colleagues university-wide. Professor Jackie Labbe, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) gave the keynote speech, titled 'Of road maps and pathways: Navigating the Covid-19 year(s).' More than 260 participants attended, including academic and professional services staff, students, Student Union staff and members from DMU Partner Institutions.

Staff led 25 parallel workshops via Microsoft Teams and keynote speeches for each conference theme were streamed live on YouTube. Posters were also displayed on the online conference page for attendees to view at lunchtime. The virtual aspect of the conference provided the benefit of easily recording each workshop for staff to catch up with or revisit at a later date.

[Visit the conference webpage](#) for the recordings.

Feedback from the conference included:

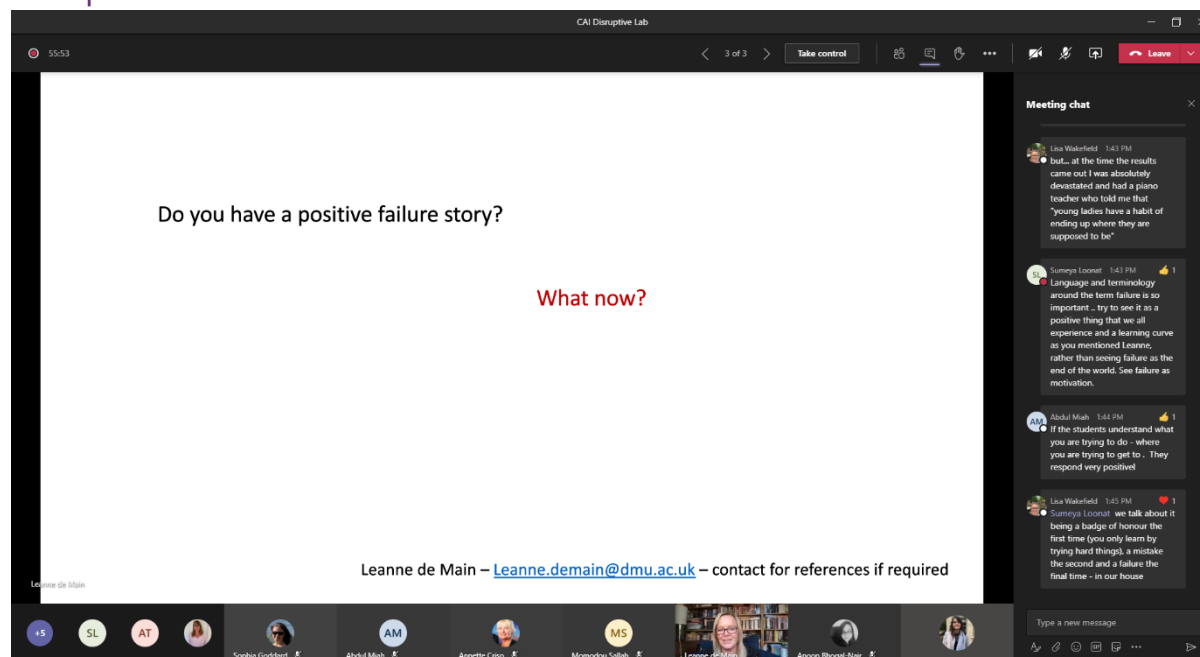
"Enjoyable, enlightening, interesting and varied. A great day. Easy to access the parallel talks."

"Great opportunity to learn from colleagues."

"DMU puts on great conferences with brilliant well thought out sessions, this was no exception. Thank you."

"It's good to have more such conferences or workshops that we can share experience and case studies."

Disruptive Labs



Engendering disruptive pedagogy is one of the central tenets of CAI, and in this context, CAI launched its termly 'Disruptive Lab' in 2020. The purpose of the Disruptive Lab is to generate space for disruption where DMU staff can share innovative proposals/ideas to disrupt teaching, learning, assessment and feedback within DMU. Ideas presented can be at the stage of testing the proof of principle, or based on previous experience. We will now detail the subjects and outcomes of our Disruptive Labs held between 2020-2021.

Setting students up to fail

15 people attended our first Disruptive Lab on 1 December 2020 where we invited Josh Dale, Head of Innovation Centre, DMU to talk about disruption and Leanne de Main, Associate Dean (Academic), Business and Law, to discuss how we can help students learn by setting them up to fail. Feedback showed the session was well received:

"This was fantastic. Best session I've attended in a very long time!"

"We need more of these sessions - really great conversations."

Provocation: The Failure of Ed Tech

Dave Parkes, Director of Library and Learning Services led our second Disruptive Lab on 25 February 2021, discussing the failure of educational technology. 16 people attended, some of whom commented on the 'interesting' and 'fascinating' discussion:

"Very interesting conversation... Many thanks David."

"Really interesting session, thanks Dave and thanks all for discussion."

"Thanks David, fascinating discussion."

Semesterisation

CAI invited the Student Action Committee to lead a Disruptive Lab on 9 March 2021 to discuss the pros and cons (and everything in between) of moving to a semester-based course structure. 11 people attended and contributed to a very honest discussion of whether semesterisation could be beneficial for students and staff at DMU. Staff commented on the 'very interesting' and 'fascinating' views put forward.

How can we create 'great' students?

On 13 May 2021, Associate Professor Roger Saunders delivered a Disruptive Lab on the importance of supporting students to become 'good learners' before focusing on the study subject.

'How much help can we give students? Detailed assignment briefs. Marking criteria. Marking schemes. Past student work. Mock tests. One-to-one sessions. Assignment workshops. Q&As.

And yet... work is still left until the end. Students don't attend lectures. They don't attend seminars. They don't prepare for seminars. They don't read around subjects. They don't know where to look for information. They don't know how to analyse. They don't know how to express. They want more help.

So let's spend the first year thinking about how we create 'great' students and worry less about the subjects they study.'

27 people attended and described the presentation as 'thought provoking', 'wonderful' and 'informative'. The event was recorded.

Misinformation - What is it, where is it, and how can we manage it in our classrooms?

During this session on 24 June 2021, Dr Ruth McKie, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, explored the classroom-based activities and assessment tools that can be used in helping students navigate the complex territory of misinformation and its implications for academic work.

'Misinformation is false, inaccurate or misleading information. Divorced from whether it is intentional or unintentional, misinformation presents significant challenges to knowledge production and evidence-based decision making.

The increasing and important access to web-based platforms and social media for positive reasons, has also created negative opportunities where the manipulation of information can then be disseminated to an international audience. While the rise of tech and these new and vast information sources can provide the public with useful resources to expand their knowledge, at the same time, these platforms, where students often source their information, is now a space where misinformation can diffuse easily. Consequently, there is growing urgency for HE students to understand what misinformation is, be able to verify information and content, and apply this in both their academic work and take forward (soft skills) in their future workplace.'

The event was recorded. 19 members of staff attended and many found the session interesting:

"Really interesting and has made me think about how I could use these ideas in my fine art teaching. Thank you!"

"Very interesting. Thank you."



What role can avatars and talking heads play in teaching?

Dr Annette Crisp, Associate Professor Head of Quality, ADH has used avatars to create learning opportunities for students for several years, and shared her knowledge and experiences with DMU staff during a Disruptive Lab on 7 July 2021.

Avatars add more than entertainment value; they can be used to encourage students in catalysing reflection, empathy and cultural appreciation. For example, they can help bring case studies to life, adding emotional depth to a student's understanding of a person's experiences, in a way that doesn't happen with text alone.

Annette discussed the research behind this teaching method, and demonstrated how easy it is to create these characters.

The event was recorded. 18 members of staff attended and feedback showed how some planned to embrace this idea in their teaching:

"Thank you, Annette. So useful and inspiring and informative. This will be really useful for policing students and desktop exercises."

The feminist classroom

Associate Professor Di Turgoose, Community & Criminal Justice Division, Health and Life Sciences, presented at a Disruptive Lab on 24 August 2021.

Di looked at how we can take an intersectional approach to issues in the classroom utilising a feminist pedagogy and consider how social categories impact students' experience of learning, engagement, and success. Exploring how learning is impacted by social categories and how we can respond to them in practical ways was central to this session.

The event was recorded. The 12 attendees were encouraged to actively reflect on their own scholarship of learning and teaching. Many commented on the “interesting” session:

“Thank you - really interesting.”

“Thanks! Very interesting.”

“This is all very interesting and engaging.”

Coffee Mornings

CAI held four virtual Coffee Mornings this academic year, aiming to provide staff with an informal forum to network with staff across the university, share new pedagogic ideas, and discuss their current experience of teaching in higher education.

We invited Leanne de Main, Associate Dean (Academic) and her co-authors to our first Coffee Morning, to talk about their new book, *Achieving Teaching Excellence: Developing your TEF profile and beyond*. 10 people attended.

For our second Coffee Morning, Chief Operating Officer, Ben Browne, shared his thoughts and reflections on the current state of play of teaching and learning in the higher education sector.

Feedback included:

“Thank you all for a brilliant session with so many perspectives shared and the overriding focus is clear - it is our collective concern to ensure the student experience is the BEST we can possibly deliver.”

“Thanks all that was a really useful session.”

The Student Action Committee (SAC) led our third coffee morning to understand staff perceptions of remote teaching and learning. The SAC workstream had previously reached out to their peers to learn about their experiences and shared this with staff during the session. 9 members of staff attended and shared their thoughts on the benefits and drawbacks on remote teaching, and how they thought it has impacted students.

We invited Professor David Mba, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise to our fourth coffee morning to discuss how we evidence the impact of our research in teaching. 10 people attended and engaged in discussion.

Festival of Teaching: The Challenge of Change

The Festival of Teaching is a celebration of outstanding learning, creative teaching and pedagogical innovation at DMU, and is a significant opportunity for De Montfort University to mutually engage communities in Leicester and beyond, as co-producers of knowledge. The festival was led by CAI and Library Learning Services, closely working with the Events team, Public Engagement and Marketing and Communications.

This year's festival was scheduled from 15-26 March 2021 and focused on the theme of ‘teaching excellence and social impact’. This centres on the intersection between academia and practice, with a proactive focus on teaching for social good and civic engagement.

FESTIVAL OF TEACHING 2021



The festival highlighted how our DMU academics continue to take teaching and learning into the real world as well as bringing the real world into the classroom. Overall, 395 people attended the 10 conference. Events were recorded.

Educational leadership

CAI works with individuals, programmes, departments, schools, faculties and external bodies to address challenges in learning and teaching, and identify innovative pedagogic solutions. We develop and design effective interventions to improve our pedagogic delivery.

External

CAI aims to become a leading pedagogic centre in the higher education industry, which means engaging with organisations and communities external to DMU. In 2021, DMU signed a contract to help set up a new University of Science, Engineering and Technology in The Gambia, providing our expert guidance and teaching knowledge.

New University of Science, Engineering and Technology in The Gambia



As part of the World Banks' African Centres of Excellence programme, DMU has been working with the Gambia Technical Training Institute and the Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Science and Technology (Ghana) to work towards setting up a university of Science and Technology. CAI has established a project group that is responsible for delivering a consultancy service for the provision of lectures, guidance on quality assurance, entrepreneurship, and employability programmes, over a three-year period, worth \$1.5 million.

Internal

CAI sits across the university and is therefore in an ideal position to disseminate good pedagogic practice and bring together experts to form groups that can make a stronger impact together. CAI also recognises the value of providing the time and space that those experts need in order to achieve greater outcomes. As such, CAI offers a Sabbatical Fellowship; has brought together Pedagogic Champions to review pan-university practice; and has established a Decolonisation Expert Group.

CAI Sabbatical Fellowships

CAI again invited DMU staff to apply for the CAI Sabbatical Fellowship this year; with the aim of providing the freedom to explore pedagogy in a deeper, more critical way and to develop tools in response by using greater space (both literally and metaphorically).

CAI Sabbatical Fellowships grant those selected a two-week period to engage in developing a learning and teaching project. This year we were able to increase the number of staff we offered the sabbatical to from five to six.

The objectives of the scheme are as follows:

1. Enable space for those who champion pedagogy to engage in developing teaching and learning projects that enhance the student learning experience
2. Create the space – supported by the required resources – for individual DMU staff to pursue pedagogic projects and research activities that advance their interests and careers
3. Develop a supportive community of practice that nurtures pedagogic champions

In October 2020, we held an online event titled 'Confessions of a CAI Fellow' in order to:

- Provide another platform for previous Fellows to share a summary of their sabbatical projects, with the PVC (Academic) in attendance
- Encourage others to apply for the sabbatical this year and answer any questions they have about the process
- Congratulate the Fellows and celebrate their work

Attendees commented: *"Definitely thinking of applying... such an inspiring afternoon"* and *"thank you for sharing what you did; it has helped me to see what can be done with the sabbatical."*

This year, having received 12 applications and following a very competitive process, six Sabbatical Fellowships were granted:

Arina Cirstea

Senior Lecturer in CLaSS

Arina's sabbatical focused on the data analysis stage of a research project aiming to identify drivers and barriers to student engagement in online writing support. The findings from her project will be used to inform more effective promotion as well as design of online learning support and resources, in particular with a view to engaging 'hard-to-reach' student groups.

Arina wrote about her sabbatical experience on [CAI's blog](#).

Kaye Towlson

Academic Team Manager

Kaye used her sabbatical to explore knowledge production/dissemination and its influence on providing, supporting and promoting certain voices in academia at the expense of others. She investigated questions such as 'What do the existing forms of knowledge production mean for decolonising higher education, academics of colour and student learning?', 'How does this influence library collections and canons of knowledge?' and 'What barriers are created by traditional academic knowledge production and publication?'

Dr Keith Scott

Programme Leader, English Language

Keith used his sabbatical to study the field of serious gaming, and how simulations, roleplays and game-based learning can increase student engagement in their studies. He interviewed a number of leading figures and practitioners in the field as an exercise in knowledge sharing, and plans to use this material as the basis for a practical teaching toolkit which will enable academics to help develop their own game-based learning activities. [Read Keith's report](#).

Dr Neil McBride

Reader in IT management

Neil used his sabbatical to apply systems thinking tools and techniques to the complex problem of student engagement. Using a focus group and addressing current literature, Neil is producing a systems model which will identify possible interventions and increase university awareness of the issues concerning student engagement.

As part of his sabbatical project, Neil connected with Tom Lowe, Head of Student Engagement and Employability, University of Winchester. Neil invited Tom to speak at an event hosted by CAI on engagement in the post-pandemic world. 27 people signed up to the session. [The event](#) was recorded.

Dr Nicola Ward

Senior Lecturer in Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacy Practice

Nicola used her sabbatical to explore staff and student perspectives of compassion and sense of

belonging at DMU. She aimed to establish whether current institutional ethos and learning and teaching strategies embody a compassionate approach, and whether there are any perceived barriers to creating a culture of compassion throughout the institution. Her ultimate aim was to create a framework of compassionate pedagogical essentials, on which to operationalise a compassionate approach to learning and teaching DMU.

Sara Coulson

Associate Professor

In her role as Operational Lead for Inter-Professional Education (IPE) in Health and Life Sciences, Sara has encountered a number of bottle necks and practical issues around student and staff engagement with IPE. As such, Sara used her sabbatical to develop a resource within Blackboard that provides an enhanced and flexible IPE learning space.

Decolonisation Expert Group

In collaboration with the Decolonising DMU team, CAI has taken steps towards the establishment of an expert group to drive the planning and development of learning and teaching support in relation to Decolonising DMU as well as supporting the institutional decolonising agenda more broadly.

An overwhelming response was generated by the call for expressions of interest in joining the group and because of this, a decision was taken to have an inner operational group and wider advisory group. Work is underway to develop an online toolkit for staff.

Pedagogic Champions

In consultation with the Associate Deans (Academic), CAI recruited six Pedagogic Champions, representing the faculties, Library Learning Services and People & Organisational Development to help support and disseminate teaching and learning best practice.

This year, they have undertaken an audit of the teaching and learning resources, structures and facilities within their faculties/departments, and across DMU. The process has been analysed and is positioned to influence teaching and learning across DMU. The analysis showed repetitive activity across faculties that could be aligned, begging the question: how do we make certain activities standard practice?

CAI also invited the Pedagogic Champions to join our Education 2030 consultation, along with representatives from the NTF, TF, CATE community to consider the question: 'What do we need to be thinking about as we transition to post pandemic learning and reimagine our delivery?.'

The key points from the consultation were:

- Higher education providers should be at the forefront of technology
- DMU needs to enable staff to use technology (training, practice, build confidence)
- Excellent change management is needed, particularly in supporting staff to adapt
- Learning should be education-led, not technology-led
- Everybody has a role to play in students' education (there is a current division between researchers and teaching staff)

- A new kind of teacher is needed
- Flexible learning: Allow students to hop on/hop off to courses? Potential for a 'pick and mix' type education? Flexible accommodation? A two-tier system to accommodate traditional learning AND accelerated programmes?
- Consolidate systems/platforms used by students and staff
- There is value in face-to-face interaction – especially at the start of courses as this encourage communication later on
- Staff need to adapt their expectations on how students should engage with them
- We need to give students added resources/skills to cope with life, and to be flexible learners as well as flexible employees
- We need to engage more with secondary schools to allow students to make choices

National Teaching Fellow, DMU Teacher Fellow and CATE Community

Update from Professor Angela O'Sullivan and Julia Reeve, Co-chairs of the committee:

The NTF/TF/CATE committee was formed in November 2019, with the aim to re-ignite a community of learning and teaching excellence that had become dispersed in recent years. Professor Angela O'Sullivan and Julia Reeve were elected as Co-chairs of the committee at that meeting and initial Terms of Reference were agreed. Julia and Angela were re-elected the following year.

Various committee roles were created, following the format of the Association for National Teaching Fellows: Secretary, Learning & Teaching Conference representative, EDI representative, Digital representative, Social Media representative, NTF representative, CATE representative as well as representatives from each Faculty and directorate. Most of these roles have now been taken on by members of the community.

The committee meets three times per year and holds an annual AGM which all DMU TFs, NTFs and CATE winners are invited to attend.

The community has around 50 members with five new TFs and one new NTF joining in 2021. A Teams site has been created for the community which contains meeting agendas and minutes, event information and a list of members.

Online profiles have been created for members: these are included on a dedicated webpage. New TFs are required to provide a profile when they receive their award: the page has not yet been updated to include these or to remove TFs who chose not to reapply this year.

The Learning & Teaching Conference representative, Jo Rushworth, has recently drawn on the expertise of the whole community in order to make proposals for the upcoming conference, including a change of date from February 2022 to September 2022.

The location of this community is still unclear as the processes for TF, NTF and CATE awards are owned by POD, yet the community sits within CAI.

Going forward the committee is focusing on the following issues that have been highlighted by the wider community:

Making the NTF/TF/CATE community more diverse by:

- Increasing BAME membership of the community
- Increasing professional services membership of the community

Increasing strategic input of the community by:

- Early stage input into strategic initiatives, e.g. new University Learning & Teaching Strategy
- Input into TF, NTF, CATE application, mentoring and selection processes

Making the NTF/TF/CATE community more visible by:

- Further developing online presence
- Further developing social media presence including new name/hashtag
- Offering further opportunities for mentoring and collaboration, for example informal drop-in sessions for aspiring Fellows

The community has already been successful in relation to these strategic objectives with newly appointed TFs representing the BAME community and the professional service community and a new NTF from the professional services community. The community was also well represented at the Advance HE 2021 symposium with six members of the DMU TF/NTF/CATE community presenting.

Resources

Journals

Gateway papers/Journal of Critical Southern Studies

CAI worked with Professor Richard Hall, Dr Alan Brine and Alan Cope to relaunch Gateway papers at the Learning and Teaching Conference on 5 February 2021.

CAI also relaunched the Journal of Critical Southern Studies (JCSS) as a pedagogic research, decoloniality and critical Southern voices outlet. We revived the Editorial Board and Advisory Group consisting of members based around the globe to establish a way forward and put out a call for papers for the first special issue. This will be published in January 2022.

Both journals are now housed on the brand new [DMU Press web platform](#).

Online resources

Website

[CAI's website](#) is DMU's main repository of resources promoting teaching and learning excellence and disruption. Content such as our event recordings, real-life learning resources, our teaching and learning toolkit and external guides are all housed in this virtual space. The site received 3,061 page views between 1 September 2020 and 1 September 2021.

Blog and newsletter

CAI launched a blog during 2021, featuring members of the university commenting on various aspects of advancing teaching, learning and assessment at DMU.

The blog posts are shared in our newsletter, which was also launched in 2021. The newsletter is an opportunity for us to engage with those who have an interest in CAI's activities, as we share upcoming events, recordings, insights, thought-pieces, our work with students, and more.

CAI also continues to grow its social media presence, by promoting our activities on Twitter, where we now have 292 followers.

Teaching and Learning Toolkit

In April 2020, CAI created a Teaching and Learning Toolkit to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for all virtual teaching-related content already available internally and externally to help staff teach throughout the lockdown period – including recorded webinars, articles, training guides and signposts for upcoming events, divided into three categories: remote teaching, remote assessment and remote student support. Staff continue to use this site, with it having received approximately 890 visits between September 2020 and September 2021.

Conclusion

We hope that you have enjoyed reading the breath of CAI's work within DMU, over the last year. Our focus on the Student Voice, Pedagogic Encounters, Educational Leadership, and generating resources, have supported teaching and learning across DMU and we have had very positive feedback over the last year, from both staff and students.



Professor Momodou Sallah
CAI Director



Sue Phillips
PA

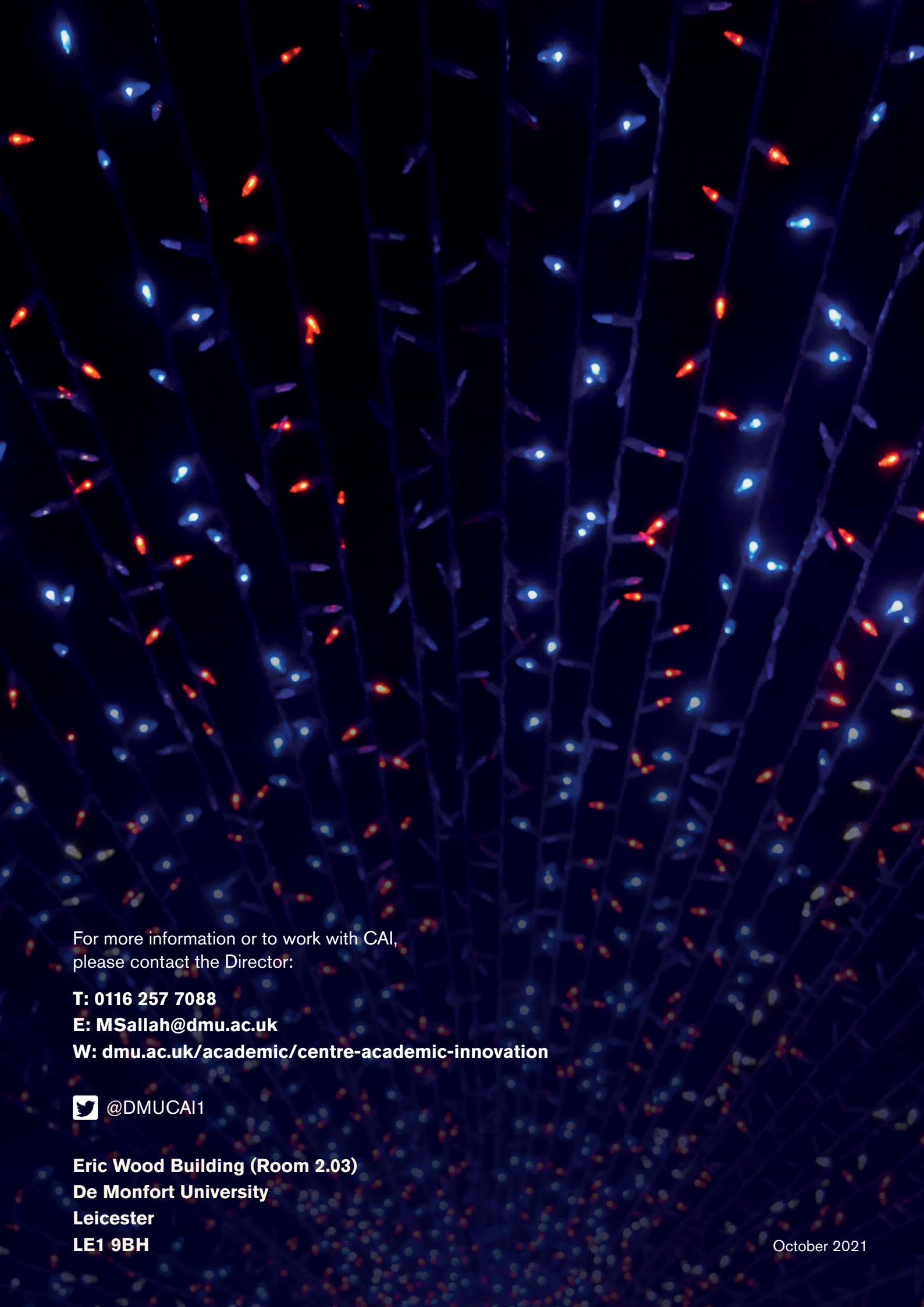


Demi Middleton
CAI Coordinator

CAI is currently staffed by its director, coordinator and a 0.5FTE admin support, clearly punching above its weight. This will be compounded by the budget cuts. However, we will continue, over the next year, to support learning and teaching transformation, as well as enhancing the student experience, through engendering disruptive pedagogies. We also have a golden opportunity to merge with other outfits across DMU to form the new Centre for Academic Innovation and Teaching Excellence, to come into force from 1 October 2021.

The Education 2030 project will have far-reaching consequences across DMU and CAI will play its part in deploying all resources at its disposal to support the project. Our work over the next year will be underpinned by the Empowering University Strategy, especially its cross-cutting themes of equality for all, sustainability and the sustainable development goals, digital transformation, and financial strength.

CAI's work will continue to focus on the four key areas of Student Voice, Pedagogic Encounters, Educational Leadership and Resources.



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